

Senate Bill 380

March 14, 2013

Presented by Hank Worsch

Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Hank Worsch, License Bureau Chief for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here on behalf of Director Hagener in opposition to Senate Bill 380.

SB 380 will create 1,500 restricted B-10 nonresident big game combination licenses that are valid only in identified wilderness areas. These licenses will be sold for the fee of \$824 plus the \$10 hunting access enhancement fee. All money received from the sale of these licenses must be used by the Department to acquire public hunting access to inaccessible public land.

In the past two years we have not sold all of the 17,000 nonresident big game combination licenses. By lowering the fee, nonresidents who currently hunt in a wilderness area will purchase the reduced fee licenses, which will result in additional loss in revenue. The account that SB 380 would transfer funds to currently has \$490,000 and the Department has only been able to expend less than \$100,000, because of the limited number of projects that could be accomplished over the last three years. Also, since these license fees in SB 380 are earmarked for acquiring access to inaccessible public land, the shift in the purchase of the license will also result in a shift from other earmarked funds. Upland Game Bird Habitat, Upland Game Bird Planting, Wildlife Habitat, Wildlife Habitat Trust Interest, Wildlife Habitat Trust, Hunting Access, Search and Rescue, and General License accounts will collectively lose \$1,274,402.

This is one of many bills that proposes to alter hunting and fishing license structure and costs, and each bill is being addressed independently. Over the years, in this piecemeal fashion, we have accumulated about 30 different classifications and discounts, from youth hunters, to aged hunters, to college students, to veterans, and to nonresident relatives. And they all have their place. But rather than simply adding to the list, with discounts that are all over the map, we believe it is necessary to make a more effective and equitable system. For example, over the interim, we hope it is possible to work with hunters and anglers on the list of classifications, and then decide on a half-price discount, or some set of appropriate discounts. But as it stands right now, we have confusing discounts that are inconsistent, difficult to administer, and cost the state millions in license revenue. We find it troubling to simply continue to add to that jumble.

The Department respectfully requests a "do not pass".

Thank you.